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Such inquiries are, however, beyond the scope of this article, which will have fulfilled its purpose if it to any extent prepares the way for them.

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THE SEX PROBLEM.

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AT the first International Moral Education Congress held in London a year or two ago, a well-known co-educationist said that the sex evil was England's greatest curse, that little was being done to check it, and that the remedy lay in the rehabilitation of sex.

As a large part of the gladness and goodness of life is an expression of thought and feeling that are connected with the recognition of sex differences and relations, this reinstatement ought not to be a formidable task. The sex impulses in themselves involve no guilt, and the miseries to which they give rise are to a great extent imaginary, that is to say, they are "thought's own substance made a cage for thought," or, in scientific instead of poetic language, they are the product of hypnotism and suggestion. But they are not the less fearful on that account, for the passions upon which imaginations are founded are real forces, like electricity or heat or radiation. Like these, however, they can be studied and controlled for the benefit of mankind, and herein is the redemption of society from the slavery of sex to be sought. Man will never be made master of his world through physical science alone. The psychologist will have to work with the doctor of medicine if the sex problem is ever to receive scientific treatment, and be rescued from the thriving class of social teachers whose activities constitute the *raison d'être* of the Pure Literature Society. The physician generally takes a static view of the question. Judging by the prodigious

number of 'oversexed' men and women who consult him, he forms the conclusion that human appetites are, and always will be distressingly tyrannous, and forgets that the very functions of the body change even from generation to generation, while the modes of the mind are infinitely various and are influential in the physical sphere.

From the psychological standpoint, the sex trouble is due to suggestive, or crowd morality. Under certain circumstances, which until quite recently have been beyond the control of intelligence, the sex passions work a prodigious amount of the worst kind of harm, with which they have become so firmly associated in people's minds that they give rise to extreme diffidence, merging, almost, into insane fear. The very words which express the common facts of reproduction are enough to set most people ablaze with emotion. Perceiving the blush and stammer with which his first question about the matter is greeted, the child ponders long and profoundly on what this terrible, kindling, criminal experience can be which must not be revealed to him. Fixed and burned into his mind by its naturally strong emotional interest, which makes so powerful an appeal to the imagination, the subject charms yet haunts him, somewhat in the same way as the lustrous, twirling contrivances manipulated by Mesmer paralyzed the wits of his patients and intensified their consciousness on the one particular thought which he wanted to set in relief. The child whose thoughts, in spite of himself, have become centered on this danger spot, helplessly magnifies it in his heated fancy until every lively companion, every dictionary, and every vicissitude of the sex life that comes under his observation is a peril to him; and the simple delights and homely virtues of that life, so deep-rooted in human sympathies and primal necessities, are lost for him in perplexity and vain questioning. Thus much of the strength and beauty of youth, which might regenerate the world, are wasted on ground "overgrown with foul and noxious fungoids and haunted by all the evil spirits that curse human life." Accurate

information would cool the fever down in a moment, and confine the thoughts which keep it up to their own extremely narrow channels. But everyone around him is hypnotized with a similar fear, as if there were some weird evil, some hateful witchery, some indefinite imposture in the sex impulses. The whole subject is taboo and must not be approached without halting excuses and expiatory unction.

In all this timidity and shame, the reality on which they are founded is forgotten. The fear sentiment has a groundwork of truth, the Spencerian truth that whatever does harm and brings about unhappiness is evil, and whatever does the opposite is good. When the sex passion brutalizes men and enslaves women, it is evil; and when it reproduces the best stocks and promotes happy family life, it is good. The block morality which makes no distinction between these two cases is both cruel and unprogressive; and now it is a real danger to society. It is often remarked that the unprecedented material progress that has been made during the nineteenth century has perilously outgrown the moral progress that has been achieved within that period. A less traditional and more intellectual type of morality is badly wanted. All the systems of conduct which make a sharp dividing line between good and evil, tend to set up rules which hypnotize people and degenerate into fetiches and shibboleths. They are lazily accepted as infallible guides, and all who, for whatever reason, do not conform to them are branded with infamy. The injustice of stereotyped moral laws, especially in regard to marriage, is being felt very keenly to-day. The problem is, how to substitute an adaptive system for cast-iron formulæ indiscriminately administered, without creating a base casuistry. A considerable amount of both intellect and education is requisite to determine the nature of the consequences of any particular act, and the process leaves room for a good deal of caprice and laxity. But social sympathy, which is largely intellectual, is now growing both broad and keen; and this will make a more

humane morality possible and will finally bring about the one-law morality taught by Jesus of Nazareth.

That law has already prevailed so far that even narrow-minded and ungenerous people can guide themselves thereby to a right settlement of the simpler perplexities of the moral life. No one would hesitate, now, to say that Casabianca's obedience was stupid rather than courageous; and few would excuse a man for such an act as taking off his hat at a funeral, putatively by way of expressing reverence, and thus catching a cold which kept his family in anxiety on his behalf for weeks. Similarly, it is now easy to see that the machine life prescribed by etiquette, and by all sorts of parochialism and convention, is really heartless and unneighborly. A more difficult problem is presented by such a case as George Eliot's first marriage, which, tried by the Spencerian test, fulfills every requirement of a consecrated union. The good which it wrought is incalculable. "Heart to heart and mind to mind" George Eliot and George Lewes were in perfect harmony; and what the former calls "the dual solitude" of her married life was no doubt the indispensable condition of the production of the works by which she conferred such ample benefits on humanity.

The suggestive sex morality appears in its lowest forms in the phallic rites of old and the several symbolisms derived therefrom, which inculcated the worship in one tribe of the bull, in another of the serpent or cock or scarabæus or dove, or the cross or globe¹; and occasionally reappears as a survival, at the present time, in the atavistic emotions of those unfortunate people who involuntarily attach a sexual significance to some particular object, such as a woman's hair or shoes, and think the display thereof indecent. More frequently it assumes the shape which Tolstoi has made so life-like in the altogether horrible but perhaps necessary "Kreutzer Sonata." It

¹"Sex and Art," by Dr. Colin Scott, *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. VII, p. 209.

would not have occurred to the youth of that story to indulge in sensuality had he not been told by his companions that all young men did so. The suggested evil harassed his imagination; and he succumbed to it because, in the society to which he belonged, the lazy, hypnotic belief prevailed that sufficient reason for doing any particular deed is furnished by the fact that others do it. Could he have proceeded on his own initiative and been able to reason out and imagine the conditions and consequences of his actions, he would have discovered in time that his passions were not uncontrollable, that he could use them indifferently for good or ill just as he liked, and that there was no inherent, fateful power in them which compelled him constantly to be the author of discord and suffering.

Suppose the social atmosphere in which he lived had been such as to furnish the contrary suggestion, the situation would still have been jeopardous, for "sin comes by the law," which invariably calls attention to evil as well as good. It is for this reason that the 'purity' campaign makes but little headway. It is prudish and ascetic, and makes a sin and a secret of the sexual passions instead of consecrating them to a good use. It is as easy to make a fetich of a virtue as a vice, and in laying down a stern rule about either there is considerable danger of inviting contemplation of the latter and intensifying this by dread and horror. George Borrow's Peter Williams, who was besieged for years by the notion that he had committed 'the unpardonable sin,' is a case in point.

Nothing in the training of a child should suggest unavoidable evil in connection with sex. Making the subject esoteric is the worst policy, for it is exactly the unusual and the mysterious which excite attention. That is one of the chief reasons why near relatives never wish to marry one another. It is contrast and novelty that is impressive to the sexual imagination. From this viewpoint, nothing is more harmful than the anxious covering of the body to which our civilization has accustomed us.

An absolute rule which is acted on out of conviction and never modified by intelligence, makes no distinction between cases in which clothes are useful and those in which they are not useful. The latter cases do not often occur, but they are important because if the child sees clothing used in circumstances in which it is positively inconvenient, or special parts of the body made conspicuous by preferential covering, sooner or later he suspects the existence of mysteries into which he must inquire. A bathing garment is indelicately suggestive because it is obviously unnecessary, not to say obstructive. A similar mental effect is produced, at any rate in the subconsciousness, by a low-cut gown, or, in a picture or statue, by a robe half slipping off, or a prudish ribbon flung across an undraped figure, though of course these compromises between revelation and concealment seldom convey extraneous reflections to vigorous minds. It is because the sight of the body and the knowledge of its functions are made a luxury and a wonder, that young men will flock to the shore to watch bands of carefully gowned girls bathing, and that the public bursts out every now and then into a rage for 'living statues,' or reads with avidity such a poem as Walt Whitman's "Children of Adam," which is essentially commonplace. No such reactions would occur if, without special instruction, everyone knew from infancy what the human body was like in all stages of its growth.

Social fevers of the 'living-statue' description manifest the existence of many thoughts and feelings that are subjected, in countries peopled by the British, to a good deal of hypocritical suppression. But of late years, healthier sentiments have declared themselves. A concrete evidence of the improvement was furnished, a year or two ago, by the decoration of the new building of the British Medical Association in the Strand, London, with statues unspoilt by fig-leaves. They form one of the common features of the street that no one particularly notices, though mercenary journalists and unwise moralists made them very conspicuous at first. The only fault which the figures

present is that they are too far from the ground to be seen easily. Such things ought to be plainly visible without having to be looked at.

Possibly, however, visual modes of demonstrating the dignity of sex are needlessly realistic. Moreover, they lend themselves to that kind of artistic talent which, in the continental countries, makes vaunting displays of sex realities and puts an even stronger accent on all that is unlovely in these than hypocrisy does. Verbal teaching is indispensable, not in set lessons or by means of special, private 'purity' books, which make the subject obtrusive, but by way of correct answers to children's inevitable questions, which give prominence to the truth interest and are neither prosaic nor poetic. The latter style of presentation is a very subtle danger, for it leads either to a disingenuous habit of calling ugly things beautiful, or to an artificial superiority to natural desires and wants. As the best popular exponent of the sex life observes, "When a human being exalts himself in the search for pure-mindedness and sanctity, thus denying his true nature, he is always in danger of falling unconsciously into the most gross sensuality, and at the same time of sanctifying that sensuality." Dealt with in a scientific spirit, the facts arouse no more emotion than other facts in nature, and the manner of approaching them need never be 'frank' or 'delicate' or 'skillful.' When once a fact is known scientifically, it can be used for the best purposes man is capable of conceiving, and the will element thus brought into the knowledge redeems bare natural truths from all baseness.

It must, however, be recognized that the shame and secrecy of sex, which is a grievous burden to men and women and a veritable crucifixion to the young, has a sound basis in the prodigal sexuality of nature, which is now understood so well that men could govern it in their own interests, only that they are ashamed to use the knowledge. In this department of her operations, as in many another, the natural and necessary is opposed to the

humane, and it is impossible to follow out the former rule without severe moral struggles and the infliction of terrible suffering on society. Evolutionists read into nature a solicitude for life and perfection, if not for the individual at any rate for the race, which the facts utterly contradict. For example, as Professor Metchnikoff has pointed out, no machine devised by man was ever so ill fitted together and so full of impeditives, antiquated structures as the human body; and as Dr. Lester Ward has demonstrated, there are many trees the bark of which embraces the growing inner tissues with a well-nigh deadly grasp. The pressure has to be overcome, by main force, at great vital expense to the tree which might have been saved by a very simple arrangement of the corky layer into narrow vertical strips. The plan of slitting the bark to assist the growth has readily occurred to arborists, he informs us, and has been most successful. Hundreds of such examples will occur to every reader who thinks and observes.

In the social order similar maladaptations are matters of daily observation. To mention a few of them, parents have tempers utterly at variance with those of their children; the distribution of acquisitive power is altogether out of proportion to needs and merits; men fall in love with and marry, in the utmost confidence, women whom afterwards they detest; and the sex instincts become alert, as a rule, in early childhood.² Production lavish and spendthrift beyond all human imagination, production at any price, appears to be nature's only care, inasmuch that one birth is balanced by a million deaths, and one well-developed being by myriads of ill-developed ones. But since man has dared to defy nature by adopting an economy of his own, the birth and the death rate have both progressively decreased, while food supplies and the amount of wealth per head have increased proportionately, and popular education has made enormous advances. All over

² 'Études sur la nature humaine,' par Élie Metchnikoff, p. 121.

Europe advancing medical science and improved sanitation have steadily brought both rates down from 1875 to the present time. The following table shows the differences that this movement has effected in them:

	1875		1909	
	Birth Rate Per Thou- sand.	Death Rate Per Thou- sand.	Birth Rate Per Thou- sand.	Death Rate Per Thou- sand.
England and Wales..	35.4	22.7	25.6	14.5
Scotland	32.5	23.3	26.4	15.3
Ireland	26.1	18.5	23.5	17.2
Denmark	31.9	21.0	28.0	13.1
Norway	31.2	18.8	26.1	13.5
Sweden	31.2	20.3	25.6	13.7
Austria	39.9	30.0	(1908) 33.5	(1908) 22.3
Hungary	45.0	37.0	37.0	25.1
Switzerland	32.0	24.2	(1908) 27.1	(1908) 16.2
German Empire	40.6	27.6	(1908) 32.1	(1908) 18.1
Prussia	40.7	26.6	31.8	17.0
Netherlands	36.6	25.6	29.1	13.7
Belgium	35.2	22.7	(1908) 24.9	(1908) 16.5
France	25.9	23.0	19.6	19.3
Spain (1888)	36.6	(1888) 30.3	32.6	23.4
Russia (1881)	47.8		('96-1900) 49.3	('96-1900) 31.9

It will be remarked, and indeed every slum invites the same observation, that birth and death rate alike are lowest where mental, moral, and physical vigor together are greatest, and good government prevails. In Australia and New Zealand, mainly by non-natural means, the birth and the death rate have been reduced, within the last thirty years, by 8.7 and 5.6 per thousand respectively. The average birth rate, in these highly favored regions, is now 26.9, the average death rate 9.8.

But in spite of health authorities and social economy, the fact remains that man is endowed with sexual passions immeasurably beyond the requirements of race-perpetuation. Far from being creative, the sex instinct is essentially destructive, and its effective action takes place at a katabolic crisis that has no direct or conscious relation to the upbuilding process which it initiates. Its

distinctive character is most clearly seen in its aberrations. Thus it is always the strongest in soldiers on active service, and in drunkards and criminals who delight in cruelty; and it has had striking manifestations in the rites of worshipers like the Bacchantes, the crimes of despots like Nero and Catherine de Medici, and the recent 'Ripper' and maiming outrages at Horley, Liverpool, and Berlin, which were doubtless due to sexual depravity.

But however great the brutalities to which the law of nature has given rise in domestic life, and however many unwelcome children it has brought into the family circle, there have always been men and women who regard such troubles as a dispensation of providence, and even glorify them into supreme blessings. Few people realize that this creed belongs to quite primitive and savage times, when fecundity was all-important because famine, disease, and war both inflamed the passions and abnormally thinned the population. As Professor Metchnikoff and Professor Westermarck have shown by such ample evidence, in all the cruder civilizations procreation has been a religious duty to the non-fulfillment of which dire punishments attached, and which was enforced by laws that were sanctified, as a rule, by the fantastic belief in the ministry of the living to the dead. If unmarried adults existed at all, they were outcasts. In many cases, children were betrothed in babyhood; and the revolting practice obtained of putting little girls to uses for which their bodies were not mature. As a consequence, teeming populations sprang up in which infanticide, natural selection, and other forms of murder were unavoidable. In the light of these facts, the laws for promoting growth of population that are now being proposed in France do not appear feasible, neither does the frantic propaganda by proclamation, preaching, and placard, through which the otherwise eminently sane M. Guyau would compel French women to be anxious to have large families.

The conception that every human being must be preserved, attain complete self-realization, and enjoy a free

and happy life, is quite modern and is incompatible with the prevalent approval of indiscriminate multiplication. It has never been proved that numbers constitute national greatness and strength. Germany, with a population of fifty-six millions, is as powerful a nation as Russia with one hundred and thirty millions, and Japan with forty-five millions as China with four hundred millions. Defectives are three times more prolific than healthy men and women, the relative decrease of whom is to-day an alarming symptom of degeneration in all civilized countries. The indefinite multiplication even of the fit is undesirable, as it undoubtedly creates unemployment, retards art and science, and reduces work to the mere repetitionary and instinctive activities of earning daily bread.

Moreover, women, if they are truly free, seldom desire to have a large family, and it is the maternal instinct itself which dictates the desire. To entrust the social future to this, the strongest constructive force in all nature, is absolutely safe, despite the almost ludicrous fears which are now being propagated with regard to it. The modern woman wishes to have but a few children because she can be a good mother only if she has a wide and sympathetic knowledge of the world in which they will be citizens, develops her own individuality, and so helps other people's children as to ensure them a happy and complete life also.

The feminine craving for mere display and amusement is for the most part a responsive attitude taken up in deference to masculine tastes. The treatment of this topic, especially by suffragettes, is frequently marked by lack of humor, kindness, and historical imagination. Here is a characteristic outburst:

Man, prompted by his distempered bodily passion, or jealous for the adjuncts of petty power, forbade woman the education, the freedom and the self-development which would have rendered her less physically servile to himself, would have elevated her own individuality and character,—and would have had a transmitted ennobling effect upon her progeny. He might, indeed, be willing craftily to ascribe to her all honied qualities, and thus to flatter and beguile a complaisant submissiveness on her part, but he *was*

loath, very loath, to make possible to her aught of equality or of strength, physical or mental, in any point adverse to his own endarkened selfishness.

If men are brutes, it is heredity, in great measure, which has made them so, and their sufferings from this cause are almost as great as those of the women. The sexual hyperæsthesia of men is to be traced, to a yet larger extent, to the hypnotizing notion that they cannot, need not, and must not restrain their appetites, and to the offensive and untruthful cynicism, now so common, according to which real puritans are non-existent. That of women can also be traced to psychic influences. Its characteristic physical effect, in their case, bears all the marks of hypnotic phenomena, appearing, as it does, at expected, not to say dreaded, intervals, but with considerable irregularities. Moreover, it has social sanctions of great solemnity and secrecy. The fact that in some cases it is debilitating and that very naturally its absence is associated with disease, generally of the fear type—though not, certainly not, with sterility—furnishes the anti-suffragette with a cogent, though by no means unanswerable argument against the enfranchisement, and indeed the higher education, of women. But, undoubtedly, this recurrent trouble is occasioned by undue sexual excitement, which amongst savage women is mainly physical, and amongst civilized women mainly psychic and therefore more drastic and irradiative in proportion as the imagination has more potency than direct stimulation. It is because women find that intense interest in their work, a varied experience, and athletic exercise weaken suggestibility and rid them of their natural disabilities that, especially in England, they are not so anxious to marry as they were in the days of their subjection. This reluctance is alarming to the ‘increase and multiply’ theorists, even if they see no immediate prospect of the necessity of reproduction by artificial means, or by the manufacture of the homunculus to whom M. Finot has introduced us in his fantastic treatise on old age.

But the deep sympathy of women for men will pre-

vent even the check of the hyperæsthesia, as long as it exists in the latter. The hope of both lies in the fellowship in business interests, and in the pursuit of truth and the creation of beauty which is now growing up between them. The too-solemn American professor who, without laughing, can actually oppose sex to intellect in women, and condemns the feminine lover of science to an 'agamic school' and her incurious-minded sister to an 'emotional' education, is making the worst possible mistake if he would promote the hygiene of the race. Moreover, it is precisely the undemonstrative men and women who have the strongest passions, which dreaming does not burn out, and who need marriage the most. The delight in truth-seeking makes meaner satisfactions unnecessary, and, as Dr. Colin Scott writes, "the little ecstasy of art is, it seems, an equivalent of and an inoculation against the larger ecstasy of sex."

It is not true that conjugal infidelity is on the increase. There never was a time when love between husband and wife was so strong, comprehensive, and intelligent as it is now; and many a marital partnership of heart and mind is now possible which could not exist when the pathetically humble wife knew nothing but matters of the house, while her lord knew a thousand things. Monogamy is counteractive of sex fetichisms and seasonal heats, but strictly speaking it is almost impossible as long as the woman is expected to play a merely reproductive part, physically and mentally, and has no intellectual interests and no real originality; for men like change, and there is a sameness in emotional experience with one woman that palls after a time. It is the intellect which is the differentiating factor of the mind, and its pleasures are continuous and are even more intense, though calmer, than the physical ones. Now that women are capable of development, it is therefore possible for a man "in one woman to marry the changing variety of the race."

This kind of conjugal union is useful to society in the highest degree, but unfortunately it can hardly be main-

tained without the practice of Neo-Malthusianism, which, however, unpleasant though it be, is far preferable to thinking about sex, or the mastery of women by men, or the production of miserable children. But the very use of this method will eventually make it unnecessary and bring about the perfect adaptation of sex desire, and even, perhaps, of sexual power and fertility, to the social need for the renewal of population. Diminishing fecundity and mortality, as Herbert Spencer has demonstrated, will increase parental and social goodwill, and thus the brotherhood of man will become possible.

Both boys and girls, by the time they reach physical maturity, should understand the whole mechanism of sex; and adults ought to know something of its chief abnormalities, because without this knowledge it is impossible to sympathize with contemporaries or to read history aright. The story of man has been made largely by sexual pervers, an understanding of whom would modify hero-worship and herd morals in favor of rationality and social individualism. Then sexual excitants, *e. g.*, war, brutal sport, alcohol, and possibly animal food, would be avoided; sentimental poetry and novels, with the spread of scientific knowledge of the sex world, would be replaced by a livelier and less academic sociological literature: and society would be more governed by women as mothers.

It is not too much to say that two-thirds of the sufferings of the world have a sexual origin. The worst of them could be remedied by the sterilization of criminals and lunatics, trial marriages without children, and the enforcement of parental responsibility. But until the veil of shame is removed from the facts out of which they arise, the selection of stocks and regulation of population which would eradicate them from the body politic will be impossible. Therefore, in the words of Dr. August Forel, for whose clear exposition of the sex life many unprofessional readers are deeply grateful, "Let us not abandon our race to the fatalism of Allah; let us create it ourselves."

LONDON.

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